

## FINLAND'S MILITARY HISTORY FROM THE 12TH TO THE 21ST CENTURIES

### **1100–1809: Finland under Swedish rule**

From the 12th century until 1809, the area of modern-day Finland was part of Sweden. In the 17th century Sweden grew into a great power, and Finnish soldiers fought as far away as Central Europe. The Finnish cavalry men's battle cry of 'Hakkaa päälle' ('Cut them down') became famous and they started to become known as the Hakkapeliittas.

### **The Finnish War 1808–1809: Finland becomes part of Russia**

In 1808–1809 Sweden and Russia went to war as part of Napoleon's wars throughout Europe, which led to Sweden losing the area which is now Finland to Russia. Finland became an autonomous part of the Russian Empire, with its own conscript army from 1881 to 1901.

### **1917–1918: Finland becomes independent and descends into civil war**

Finland became independent from Russia, which was undergoing a revolution, on 6 December 1917. Following this, a bloody civil war broke out in Finland between government forces – the Whites – and the insurgent Red Guards. The Germans supported the government forces and the Finnish Jaegers, who had been trained in Germany, formed part of the White Army, whilst Soviet Russia supported the Reds. For the Whites, the war was a war of liberation from Russia, and it lasted until May 1918. In the battles and prison camps of the war, almost 30,000 Finns died. Thanks to their superior leadership and troops, the Whites won the war.

### **The Winter War 1939–1940: Finland defends itself against the Soviet Union**

Between 30 November 1939 and 13 March 1940, Finland fought the Winter War against the Soviet Union, which had attacked Finland in the course of the Second World War. Finland's brave battle against the Red Army gained sympathy around the world, and an abundance of assistance arrived in Finland from other countries. However, when it came to the battles themselves, Finland was almost completely on its own. Finland succeeded in avoiding an occupation, but was forced to give up a number of areas which it had lost in battle to the Soviet Union. In the battles of the Winter War over 26,000 Finnish soldiers and 100,000 Russian soldiers died. Finland, with its population of four million, managed to overcome the attack by the Soviet Union, which had a population of 200 million.

### **The Continuation War 1941–1944: Finland, alongside Germany, attacks the Soviet Union**

Following the Winter War, Finland wanted redress for the losses it had incurred, and in the summer of 1941 Finland, alongside Germany, attacked the Soviet Union. The Finnish Army took back the areas lost to the Soviet Union during the Winter War. The Soviet Union launched a major attack on Finland in the summer of 1944, when Germany's loss had become apparent. The Finnish Army fell back in a fighting retreat, and the Soviet Union signed a peace treaty with Finland without occupying it. As part of the peace treaty, the Finns were forced to expel the German troops from Finnish Lapland in 1944–1945. In the battles of the Continuation War over 60,000 Finnish soldiers and 200,000 Russian soldiers died.

### **The post-war period 1945–2015: Finland as an independent and neutral state**

Following the Second World War, Finland retained its independence and own national institutions, and did not end up as part of the Eastern Bloc. Finland walked a fine line between east and west until the breakup of the Soviet Union. Nowadays Finland is an unallied country, but is a part of the European Union. Finland practises general conscription, whereby men undertake military service for a period of 5.5–11.5 months, between the ages of 18 and 29. Military service is voluntary for women. There are 12,000 soldiers and civilians working for the Defence Forces as hired personal, in addition to 230,000 soldiers in the reserve.

### **Peacekeeping 1956–2015: Finland as a major peacekeeping nation**

Finland has partaken in United Nations peacekeeping operations since 1956, when Finnish peacekeepers were sent to Suez. Since the 1990s, Finland has partaken in crisis management tasks in collaboration with NATO and the EU too. Since 1956 around 40,000 Finns have partaken in crisis management tasks in over 30 operations in different parts of the world.

## **WELCOME TO THE MILITARY MUSEUM'S *FROM AUTONOMY TO ATALANTA* EXHIBITION**

The Military Museum is a part of the Defence Forces and operates under the National Defence University. Founded in 1929, the Military Museum's role is to preserve and present material relating to Finland's military history. Its collections feature over 200,000 objects and are the broadest military history collections in Finland. Over 60,000 people visit the Military Museum each year, and its image, collection and information services are used by thousands more.

\*\*\*

The *From Autonomy to Atalanta* exhibition in the Military Museum's Manege tells the story of Finnish military history, and of the Defence Forces of an independent Finland. The Manege is a former storage hall of the Suomenlinna Fortress Artillery that was built during 1880-81. Before it was transferred to the use of the Military Museum, it also served as an artillery and training hall for the Naval Academy.

The exhibition consists of three parts: a "military showcase," heavy equipment and multilingual information boards. In addition there is an interactive part. Information is provided in Finnish, English, Swedish and Russian.

The long uniform showcase displays 17 different military figures, from the old time soldiers of the end of the 19th century to present day peacekeepers, all wearing authentic clothing and equipment. In addition to the mannequins, the authentic collateral material in the showcase is also worth the spectator's attention.

The heavy equipment section shows equipment ranging from 500-year-old artillery to equipment confiscated during the Atalanta operation, such as a ship used by Somali pirates. Among other equipment, we would like to mention the legendary 88 mm anti-aircraft artillery gun, a horse-drawn field kitchen, a Vickers tank and, among the newer equipment, an MTO-66 anti-ship missile built in the Soviet Union and a buggy.

In the interactive section the visitors can try out what a soldier's equipment was like during different eras. Amongst other things, visitors can try making up a bunk.

\*\*\*

The *From Autonomy to Atalanta* exhibition in the Military Museum's Manege at Suomenlinna is open daily between 11 am and 6 pm until 31 October 2017. +358 299 530 261.

The submarine *Vesikko* at Suomenlinna is open daily between 11 am and 6 pm from 8 May to 31 October 2017. +358 299 530 260.

**[www.sotamuseo.fi](http://www.sotamuseo.fi)**

## WELCOME TO THE MILITARY MUSEUM'S SUBMARINE, *VESIKKO*

The Military Museum is a part of the Defence Forces and operates under the National Defence University. Founded in 1929, the Military Museum's role is to preserve and present material relating to Finland's military history. Its collections feature over 200,000 objects and are the broadest military history collections in Finland. Over 60,000 people visit the Military Museum each year, and its image, collection and information services are used by thousands more.

\*\*\*

The CV-707, ordered by Germany and built by a Dutch engineering office, was built in Turku and launched in May 1933. To begin with, the CV-707 was in German use and included in German naval plans until the summer of 1934.

The Finnish state purchased the CV-707 in January 1936, and in April she was christened *Vesikko* (after the mink, a small animal belonging to the weasel family that is at home in water and along the shores). In the 1930s, *Vesikko*'s tasks included participating in joint exercises of the submarines and the entire Coastal Fleet as well as submariner training. She also visited Estonia together with the Submarine Flotilla.

In the Winter War (1939-1940), the role of *Vesikko* and the other submarines remained small. In the Continuation War (1941-1944) *Vesikko* torpedoed the *Vyborg*, a Soviet freighter. Alongside her attack tasks, *Vesikko* patrolled the Gulf of Finland and protected trading ship traffic. *Vesikko*'s duties as a warship ended on 15 December 1944.

The Paris Peace Treaty signed after the Second World War prohibited Finland from having submarines. To begin with, other uses were sought for the submarines, but in the end, with the exception of *Vesikko*, they were sold to Belgium to be scrapped.

For several years, *Vesikko* was allowed to decay until the decision was made to restore the vessel. After a long and demanding restoration, *Vesikko* began her new life as a preserved submarine in 1973.

The submarine *Vesikko* is part of the Military Museum's collection and one of the few remaining submarines from World War II. She has been a part of the scenery on Suomenlinna for almost all of her existence; as a part of the Submarine Flotilla, while awaiting her final fate after being decommissioned, during her restoration and finally as a museum exhibit open to the public. Over the years, approximately one million visitors have visited *Vesikko* on Suomenlinna.

\*\*\*

The submarine *Vesikko* at Suomenlinna is open daily between 11 am and 6 pm from 8 May to 31 October 2017. +358 299 530 260.

The *From Autonomy to Atalanta* exhibition in the Military Museum's Manege at Suomenlinna is open daily between 11 am and 6 pm until 31 October 2017. +358 299 530 261.

[www.sotamuseo.fi](http://www.sotamuseo.fi)